

USAR_J-15_Yoshino

13:35:21:09

I got on the ship December 1940. And then, Maeda joined our ship 6 months later.

13:35:41:23

I was 6-month senior than Maeda. When he got on the ship, ten of his fellow aviators joined together.

13:36:12:15

He was very lively and active.

13:36:36:16

When he joined us, we didn't start the torpedo training yet. In September 1941, we started the training, at which we were supposed to launch a torpedo from the very near surface of the sea. At that time, we thought it was very hard, but all pilots were very great and mastered flying around 10-meter high from the surface of the sea. If we tried to go down below 10 meters, the propellers hit the surface. Then, we released a torpedo.

13:38:12:01

When we fired a torpedo at the very shallow water, we couldn't do the way we dropped it on the sea, because all torpedoes would just hit the bottom of the sea. During daytime, we dropped it at 100 meters, and then at night, at 200 meters. When we dropped a torpedo at 100 meters at daytime, it went down into the sea to around 60-meter depth. Then, it went up this way, and then, it made its way to a target. The setting of the depth was adjustable. Engineers adjusted the level of how deep it could go. It went down to 60 meter below the surface, and then it advanced towards a target. To prevent a torpedo from hitting the bottom of the sea, we flew only 10 meters above the water. However, if we did so, an altimeter didn't work. We tried to adjust it, but we couldn't. Thus, regarding how high we were, the height was set to a height above sea level at the airport. If the place was 20 meters above sea level, we set the altimeter to 20 meters. And it was not accurate.

13:40:50:07

I found it interesting that more experienced pilots didn't fly too closely above the water. But younger pilots flew just right above the water, and even hit the water. They were braver. The experienced pilots were more cautious.

13:41:57:19

When we departed, the weather was pretty bad. The sky was pretty much cloud-covered, and a rough sea. However, as we were approaching to Oahu Island, the sky was gradually clearing. Then, we went above the cloud. After the sky cleared, we could see below. We arrived at Kahuku Point, the northernmost point of Oahu Island. I saw it below on my left-hand side. The sky cleared pretty much. The supreme commander was Captain Fuchida, a chief bomb pilot of Akagi, and he lead the first air wave attacks on Pearl Harbor. He got in radio contact in order to form a big attack unit. The code was "Totsu-Rei." Then, a chief bomb pilot of Kaga sent the code "Totsu-Rei" to another, and we separated from the group to make a formation. At the very end of the formation, we, Torpedo bombers, lined up. Keeping the line, we went to the southern coast, along with the Akagi and Kaga group, and then, all of us got lined up. The 12 Akagi's airplanes and Kaga's 12 planes got lined up. Maeda was in the second position. I was in the fifth position of the Kaga torpedo bombers. The Navy base was in Barbers Point, where airplanes could land. When we arrived there, the first air wave of the Akagi's torpedo bombers had already dropped torpedoes, and I saw from Barbers Point all of them exploding and water splashing up. Watching the sight, I believed firmly those torpedoes ran well by dropping them at the shallow water. Passing Barbers Point, we flew over Hickam Air Force Base at a low-altitude, and turn left, and entered an inlet. At that time, we flew only 10 meters above the water, and we were ready to aim at a target. We could approach the target right away, but we couldn't be too close. There were two styles of the U.S. Battleship at that time. USS Pennsylvania, USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma, and USS Nevada were battleships of the old style. USS West Virginia was the new style. Pennsylvania-class battleships were easy to aim at. And we dropped a torpedo into it. After that, we were deciding between the left and the right turn. We used to turn right a lot, and we were told to turn right, and we did. But it was a mistake. When we turned right like this, we flew parallel to a group of ships on our left hand side. There were some non-targeted ships among them. So they could aim at airplanes flying at a low-altitude. Anyway, when we turned right, we saw clusters of red lines coming towards us. We realized we would be shot down, if we kept going. We also needed to fly up and down. When we pulled the control stick, they shot at the pilot's seat. Then, the bullet passed here. And then, we got another shot, and we heard a rattling sound behind. We got the shot at the radioman's seat. Then, the bullet cut off an electric code of a telegraphic instrument. Even though we had a terrible experience, we could manage fly toward the east. We could escape from the gunfire, and when I asked the radioman how he was doing, he was asleep. Since a machine gun and a telegraphic instrument were damaged, he had nothing to do. However, he got a shot at his shin. But he was fine. After we flew

around the harbor, we headed towards Barbers Point, and then we flew toward the west of Oahu Island. Though I don't remember well, we were told to head 30 miles toward the west, and to gather there, instead of returning directly to our ship. When we got to our gathering point, we might have been late, because we flew around the harbor, and we didn't see any planes there. We thought everybody must have returned already, so we just flew to our ship alone. Though the ship was supposed to withdraw, away from Oahu Island, after it launched the airplanes, it was still near there because of the bad weather. When we landed on the carrier, Lt. Commander Hashiguchi was waiting for us. He told us we got a lot of damage. He was depressed. Stretchers were ready on the deck. In the first group, Kitahara was in the third position, right behind me, and his plane was shot. In the second group, there were six planes, and 4 out of them were shot. In all, five torpedoes bombers of Kaga were shot down. It means we lost 15 people, because three people were on each bomber. Though everybody that managed to return alive was relieved, we were in shock with the death of 15 fellow pilots. We had to clear articles left by the deceased, so we couldn't be happy with the success of the attack. There was a meeting room for pilots on the carrier, and pay officers cooked some sweets and welcomed our return. I don't remember exactly what I ate, but they tried to do something nice for the returning pilots.

13:57:41:01

Our target was USS Oklahoma. It was the same type as USS Pennsylvania, USS Arizona and USS Nevada. USS Arizona was sunk. It was a Pennsylvania-class battleship, and the same type as USS Oklahoma. USS Oklahoma stayed at the position, where we could easily aim, and it got so many torpedoes. The day before the attack we already knew there were no aircraft carriers in the harbor. This was a big problem for us. We, pilots, talked to each other that we needed to look for the carriers tomorrow. However, we just returned without looking for them. Everybody said that we should have done something with them. After all, it was to be our ruin at Battle of Midway and also at the very end.

14:00:00:12

A counterattack? It was fast. 12 airplanes of Akagi didn't get shot. However, the plane in the first position in front of us got the eight bullets. So did we. We got bullets at the pilot's seat, the radioman's seat, and the body of the plane. Eight bullets in total. They started shooting us, when the planes before ours approached there. The second group lost 4 airplanes, and the others got shot pretty badly. Everybody thought that the U.S. must have known we would come.

Everybody believed so. It was impossible to prepare the gunfire so soon.

14:02:20:11

When we dropped a torpedo, we pulled ____ (?)

14:02:30:08

A torpedo was attached to a plane by wire. When you pulled the wire, the torpedo was released. But sometimes, there was something wrong with the wire, and we couldn't drop it. So, the day before the attack, we had a drill to make sure if we could drop it. So we never failed to drop torpedoes on the attack.

14:03:29:10

There was no tension. At that time until we dropped a torpedo, we didn't get shot. We got shot when we turned right after we launched a torpedo. It didn't take that long that the torpedo bombers of Akagi started firing after the attack fighters arrived at Kahuku Point. It took only a few minutes. It was impossible to prepare the gunfire so quick. So we thought the U.S. already knew we were coming.

14:04:46:14

Thought we wanted to make sure if a torpedo hit a target, we didn't have time to do so. The clusters of beautiful red lines distracted our view. Red lines. It was beautiful. I heard it was 13mm caliber. Anyway, their counterattack was pretty fast.

14:05:46:02

We gathered in Tankan Bay at Etorofu Island. Before that, I was in the base in Tomitaka, Miyazaki. Then, I got called. On November 18, 1941, we prepared for the departure and the carrier loaded till late night, I think, at Hyuga Lake. And, we entered Saeki Bay, and then departed on November 19. While the carrier was sailing off of Shikoku Island, we were ordered to assemble on the flight deck. Then, our officer told us that we were leaving for Hawaii. However, we were still negotiating with the U.S., and if the negotiation came to a conclusion, our mission would be cancelled, and we would go back home. If Japan declared war on the U.S., we would attack Hawaii. But this was not a coup d'etat like February 26 Incident. He told us not to worry about it. We would attack Pearl Harbor. At this moment, we were supposed to gather in Tankan Bay at Etorofu Island. It seemed Kaga was the last carrier which arrived at Tankan Bay. There were the total six carriers. All pilots were gathered on Akagi, because it was the headquarters. There was a model of Oahu Island, as large as two tatami mats. Captain Genda explained how the torpedo bombers of Kaga approached the targets.

14:10:23:10

This happened after we heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor. This guy looks like him. This guy looks like Dai Suzuki. Captain Genda explained everything. He told us to step forward. Then, they built up a nice model, which had the carriers lined up. It was well done.

14:11:14:15

The model was the same size as two tatami mats. I think so. Or less than two tatami mats. I think it was as large as two tatami mats.

14:11:36:07

While we were sailing off of Shikoku Island, we were just told that we would leave for Hawaii. At that time, the sub Captain told us. But this time, only pilots were gathered at Akagi. Only Captain Genda spoke, and nobody did. He also told us to land on the south coast of Niihau Island, when we needed an emergency landing. The submarine would rescue us, when they saw any emergency landings from a periscope. One plane actually landed on Niihau Island. His name was Nishikaichi. He was in the same class as me. He was a pilot of Hiryu. He was from Shikoku Island. He headed towards Niihau Island, but he found a farm and landed there perfectly. Then, he ditched his plane, and walked towards the south coast and waited for help. But the submarine didn't actually see him landing. All they could see was somebody standing on the beach. I don't know how far the submarine stayed from the coast. After all, the submarine assumed that there was no emergency landing.

14:14:51:05

The weather was very bad and stormy. Some people called the Northern Pacific a treacherous sea, and it was actually. There were huge waves. Small ships couldn't sail in that weather. It was impossible. Even a big carrier, like Kaga, made a creaking sound at the midnight. Nobody would enter the Northern Pacific in the winter. But an oil tanker showed up to refuel on the way, and they did a good job. Only the oil tanker sailed under such a bad weather. It was a tough job. Then, the carrier threw a rope towards the oil tanker, and then it picked up a pipe, and it pulled the oil tanker, while refueling. After it finished, the oil tanker went back to the base.

14:16:50:19

We didn't help it. The pilots didn't do such a thing.

14:17:00:07

We did nothing on the way to Hawaii. Even though everybody told me it was impossible to keep doing nothing, and there should be

something to do, I did have nothing to do actually. We were pilots, and our job was to get on a plane. When we didn't fly, we just maintained our plane, but we had maintenance men, so we didn't do much. Most of time, we were just hanging around. Really. When we were on the training, we were so busy and the training was so hard. However, once we entered a state of war, we didn't have anything to do but attacks. We just couldn't keep loading and releasing torpedoes many times. During the war, time hung heavy on pilots' hands.

14:18:47:13

Speaking of radio broadcasts in Hawaii, we didn't have any radio in our rooms, so we had to listen to it with a telegraphic instrument in the telegram room. So the radiomen told us what they heard from the radio. It was a long wave. Have you ever heard about Kurushi? It was a radio direction measuring instrument. When you turned it on, you could tell where you were flying. It used a long wave. All Japanese radio broadcasts used a long wave. So while flying over Japan, you could detect your position with it. It was easy to do so, when you used Kurushi(?). It told you your position. It showed even which direction Tokyo was. After you flew for a while, you looked at Kurushi, and it told you a direction. When you got on an airplane equipped with Kurushi, you could catch a radio. We got the info about the U.S. battleships staying at the harbor from a Japanese spy. He lived where he could watch all over the harbor, and watched the U.S. Fleet. After the U.S. Fleet left, he reported it to Japan through another radio, which was different from Kurushi.

14:22:06:12

The day before the attack, we checked the planes many times very carefully, going back and forth in a hangar at the airport. Above all, we did the drills to drop torpedoes. Radio was forbidden, so we couldn't use it. That evening, when I thought tomorrow would finally be the day for the attack, I went to the Kaga Shrine. There was a shrine near the bow of our carrier. Everybody went there, and placed some sake before the shrine, and then prayed. After that, we all loaded the sake onto our plane. Each person had two bottles of sake, so in total, six bottles of sake was loaded onto a plane. Then, we also brought them back to Japan as a souvenir. So the day before, all we had to do was maintenance. That was all. All pilots went to the Kaga Shrine, and then went to bed.

14:24:18:05

No, we didn't have any parties that night. We didn't have any events to drink together before the attack.

14:24:55:11

At night before the attack, according to the information we received, lively music was played by a Hawaiian radio station. Under the circumstances, we thought they didn't know we would come. We felt it was going to a surprise attack, and we hoped it would, instead of being ambushed. If it was going to be a violent attack, we would just do what we had to do about it. But a surprise attack would be better to us. So I think everybody hoped that this would be a surprise attack.

14:25:51:22

I don't remember what I ate at the breakfast. Thought somebody said we might have had red rice, I don't remember.

14:26:11:11

Right after I woke up, I had a breakfast.

14:26:15:03

After the breakfast, we departed. Maintenance men prepared everything. We, pilots, didn't need to help them. Weaponry men loaded a camera and other devices on a plane. We just took pictures in the air. So we didn't have any tricky jobs.

14:26:57:12

After that, we just went to the deck. Then, an order was given through speakers, saying "Scheduled pilots, line up." Even though only one plane was launched, the same announcement was made through speakers. When we had search operations, we launched only one airplane. Still the same announcement. No matter how many airplanes were launched, all pilots were waiting at a room, and then they checked the positions of the ships.

14:27:42:07

When we went to the deck, we walked in pairs. We didn't talk to each other the day before.

14:28:00:11

Though some people think that all pilots departed in full of high spirits, nobody did actually. Everybody thought that it was going to be a surprised attack, so we felt the same way as we went to a drill. We were not that strained.

14:28:54:17

Sake? We loaded them on a plane at night before the attack.

14:29:05:08

There were some lights in a hangar. A bottle of 1.8 liter. Two bottles per person. In total, six bottles per plane. We didn't write down anything on a label.

14:29:40:17

I brought them back home. Here. I went back home once. Then, we had a vacation. The flight unit of Kaga went back to Iwakuni. Kaga went back to a home port, Sasebo. The flight unit landed in Iwakuni. When a carrier went back to a home port, it didn't load any planes on it. The flight unit went back to the base. It was very rare for a carrier to go back to a port with the flight unit.

14:31:15:04

When I arrived in Iwakuni, I went out to the city. But our officer told us not to tell anyone that we went to the Hawaii attack, because so many people in Iwakuni moved to Hawaii. Actually, many people had their relatives in Hawaii. I had to be careful.

14:32:24:15

I stayed at a hotel in Iwakuni.

14:33:03:22

I don't know anything about other airports in Hawaii. We just went to drop torpedoes, and came straight back home. I don't know what was going on at other airports, such as Wheeler and Kaneohe.

14:33:54:10

Our target was a battleship, and they stood on the defense so quickly.

14:34:23:21

I didn't know anything about Americans. I didn't know them. I didn't get that much information about them. I belonged to the training unit and I was trained to be a pilot. They didn't teach me anything about Americans. Besides, when I was on the base or on the ship, I didn't even get to read a newspaper. So we were so poor at getting the information.

14:35:40:15

When the war ended, I was at Kisarazu. I came back from Philippines on February 1945. Then, I was transferred to Kisarazu. I got on Saiun at Kisarazu Air Base. Saiun was the fastest reconnaissance plane in the Japanese Navy. However, when I arrived at Kisarazu, we had the limited amount of fuel left to make only one and a half flight. That was all we had. When I heard it, I was afraid of our future. Most of Japanese tended to grin and bear it. Even though everybody knew we would lose, nobody said that. All of us avoided the word "defeat." I

understood their feelings, but I was so afraid of what would happen next, when I found out we had only limited fuel left. We, Japanese, tended to grin and bear it, so I didn't think we would give up.

14:38:55:14

I listened to Gyokuon-hoso that day. We knew we would lose. However, nobody said so. Even though we lost, nobody admitted it. I was wondering what would happen to us. I was not sure about the remote future, but I was wondering how long I could live. I thought I would die in December. Whether Japan would defeat or not, I would die at the end of the year. After I went back home, I was told to return to Kisarazu to do some work. I prepared Saiuns and gave them to the U.S. The U.S. took them back home.

14:41:07:09

We didn't like a war. We just happened to live in those days. I have various feelings, but I am proud of participating in the war. I think Japan was in crisis at that time, so it was important to fight against it for our country, though I wouldn't say I liked a war. Considering the situations at that time, good actions might be a wrong word, but I am satisfied with what I participated in the war.